

Dear Parents,

At VAES, we have an excellent student body with very few discipline problems, but we can always improve. Efforts to prevent bullying and encourage kindness at VAES is a top priority. The staff at VAES has participated in a training session on how to recognize and deal with bullying/mean behavior.

Bullying is a form of violence that is intentional and repeated and involves an imbalance of power between the people involved. Bullying can take the form of a look, gesture, word, or action. Teachers will be training our children how to recognize bullying/mean behavior and what to do about it. These skills are important life skills for children, adolescents, and adults. The VAES definition of bullying is: "When a strong, more powerful person hurts or frightens a smaller/weaker person deliberately (on purpose) and repeatedly."

The goal of our Bully Free program is to create a safe environment in which Christian values, like kindness, respect, empathy, love, and service are taught (these are "Above the Line Behaviors"). It will better enable us to instill in each individual an awareness of his/her importance in God's plan, and the need for cooperation among all people in our society. Clear expectations assist students in understanding how to relate in the classroom, hallways, on the playground, and outside of the school setting.

*Parent and Student Resources for bullying are available on the school website (vaes.org), as well as our Bullying Policy. Please review them with your child. If you need a hard copy, please request one from the school office.*

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your child's teacher or you can telephone me at 473-5121.

Sincerely,  
Wendy Baldwin, Principal  
VAES

# Village Adventist Elementary School (VAES)

## Bully Policy

VAES believes that all students have a right to a safe and healthy school environment. The district, schools, and community have an obligation to promote mutual respect, tolerance, and acceptance.

VAES will not tolerate behavior that infringes on the safety of any student. A student shall not intimidate or harass another student through words or actions. Such behavior includes: direct physical contact, such as hitting or shoving; verbal assaults, such as teasing or name-calling; and social isolation or manipulation.

VAES expects students and/or staff to immediately report incidents of bullying to the principal or designee. Staff are expected to immediately intervene when they see a bullying incident occur. Each complaint of bullying should be promptly investigated. This policy applies to students on school grounds, during the lunch period, and during a school-sponsored activity.

To ensure bullying does not occur on school grounds, VAES will provide staff development training in bullying prevention and cultivate acceptance and understanding in all students and staff to build each school's capacity to maintain a safe and healthy learning environment

Teachers should discuss this policy with their students in age-appropriate ways and should assure them that they need not endure any form of bullying. Students who bully are in violation of this policy and are subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

VAES uses a Student Pledge, which is printed in the handbook. All students sign this pledge during the registration process. This pledge outlines the code of conduct expected of VAES students.

The procedures for intervening in bullying behavior include, but are not limited, to the following:

- All staff, students and their parents will receive a summary of this policy prohibiting bullying: at the beginning of the school year, as part of the student handbook and/or information packet, as part of new student orientation, and as part of the school system's notification to parents.
- The school will make reasonable efforts to keep a report of bullying and the results of investigation confidential.
- Staff are expected to immediately intervene when they see a bullying incident occur.
- People witnessing or experiencing bullying are encouraged to report the incident; such reporting will not reflect on the victim or witnesses in any way.
- The VAES Behavior/Offense Rubric will be used as a tool for consequences and follow-up of bullying behaviors.

# Bully Free Program

VAES, 2016-2017

Outline of Activities and their focus:

Week of Aug. 29: Parent information letter on the Bully Free Program distributed to parents. Online resources for parents as well as kids are available on the school website (vaes.org). *Please read and review these resources.*

Seven weekly sessions will be taught in all classrooms during the 1<sup>st</sup> school quarter:

- Week 1: Focus: getting to know each other, defining bullying, expose myths of bullying, *Below the Line Behaviors*
- Week 2: Focus: define/name bullying behaviors, role play appropriate ways to handle a bully
- Week 3: Focus: What to do when you are bullied, or witness bullying. Provide a means of anonymous reporting of bullying behavior (Notes to the Teacher Box)
- Week 4: Focus: Learn and use assertive skills. Develop a Student Bill of Rights.
- Week 5: Focus: Conflict Resolution skills.
- Week 6: Focus: Cyber-bullying and internet safety
- Week 7: Focus: Review concepts learned, Sign Bully Free Pledge

Surveying and Anonymous Means of Reporting:

Students in grade 3-8 will take an anonymous survey, answering questions about bullying they have experienced or witnessed at school. This helps us to gauge the extent of bullying we actually have in the building. Surveys will be given periodically through the year to track bullying behaviors and address them as needed.

There will also be Notes to the Teacher Boxes (or some alternative) in all the classrooms and in Mrs. Baldwin's office. This provides a way for students to anonymously report behavior. This is a very important piece of any successful bully prevention program. Students do not want to be labeled as a tattler, and anonymous reporting helps to relieve any pressure associated with telling.

Goal setting and weekly reviews:

Classrooms will continue to review the concepts learned, and periodically set goals for their classroom, reviewing how they are doing from time to time.

# Resources for Parents

# What is a bully?

## Definitions:

Traditional Bully: When a strong, more powerful person hurts or frightens a smaller/weaker person deliberately (on purpose) and repeatedly.

### Traits include:

- imbalance of power
- intent to harm
- threat of further aggression
- creates feeling of terror for the target
- excludes target(s)
- likes to dominate other people
- targets individuals, will not let up
- sometimes hang out in groups
- use scare tactics, threaten
- likes to use other people to get what they want
- find it hard to see a situation from other person's perspective
- tend to hurt other kids when parents/adults are not around, stay under the radar
- view weaker peers as prey
- use blame and false accusations
- refuse to accept responsibility
- crave attention

Cyber-Bully: The use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others

### What bullying is not:

- occasional teasing meant to get both parties to laugh, maintains dignity and is discontinued if someone gets upset
- a one time event
- playfulness that is equal, not taunting
- good-natured ribbing reflecting closeness between two friends
- impulsive behavior in response to an act
- spontaneous
- indiscriminate striking with no intended target
- normal childhood behaviors, such as sibling rivalry
- fighting between two equally matched kids who have a conflict

Caution: Be careful when labeling an event as bullying. A key question to ask is, "Is the behavior(s) repeated?" If not, was it a one-time mistake? Stop and ask yourself if it truly fits the definitions listed above.

## Parents: What to do when you think your child is being bullied:

1. Listen to them and let them know you believe in them. A good line to get started is: "Tell me about it", and then BE QUIET, and listen. Do not ask a lot of questions up front, this will frame your child's answers. After you have listened to your child talk about it, including their own hurt/pain, then begin to ask for facts.
2. Reaffirm that bullying is not your child's fault. The blame belongs to the bully. No one deserves to be bullied, no matter what. This is no time for the "what if..." statements.
3. Ask how you can help. Guide your child to come up with a plan that gives him/her power back. Use the strategies listed in this packet under the student resource section
4. If the bullying took place on school grounds or at a school function, report the bullying to school personnel. If it is cyber-bullying, use your discretion on reporting to school officials, web site administrators, or the police.
5. If cyber-bullying is being used, copy/paste and save all the content you can. Then block or filter communication so it does not happen again. Change email address if needed, keep password and log in information private, and change if needed. Contact the police if you feel the situation warrants it.

## Parents: What NOT to do when you think your child is being bullied:

1. Do not minimize, rationalize, or explain away the bully's behavior. The bully was not just teasing. The bully intended harm, which was hurtful to your child.
2. Don't rush in and solve the problem for your child. That renders them more powerless, and remember, bullies exact power over their targets. Help your child come up with a plan using the strategies in this packet.
3. Don't tell your child to avoid the bully. This is like running and hiding, and the bully will pick up on that and pursue all the more.
4. Don't tell your child to fight back. The bully probably picked on your child because they saw them as a less than equal match. After your child loses, there will be more bullies to deal with. Being assertive with body language and aggressive talk/behavior are more likely to successfully counteract the bully.
5. Don't confront the bully or the bullies parents. This will not help, and it may make things worse.
6. Do not blame your child. Bullying is not the victims fault.
7. Do not promise to keep the bullying a secret. Rather, work out a plan together, as a team. Strive for actions that everyone feels comfortable with.

# 11 Facts About Cyber-bullying

1. Nearly 35% of kids have been threatened online and almost one in five have had it happen more than once.
2. Among this percentage, being ignored and disrespected were the most common forms of cyber bullying.
3. Nine out of ten middle school students have had their feelings hurt online.
4. About 75% have visited a Web site bashing another student.
5. Four out of ten middle school students have had their password(s) stolen and changed by a bully who then locked them out of their own account or sent communications posing as them.
6. About 21% of kids have received mean or threatening e-mails.
7. The psychological and emotional outcomes of cyber-bullying are similar to real-life bullying outcomes, except for the reality that with cyber bullying there is often no escape. School ends at 3 p.m., while the Internet is available all the time.
8. The primary cyber-bullying location where victimizing occurs, at 56%, is in chat rooms.
9. Girls are about twice as likely as boys to be victims and perpetrators of cyber-bullying.
10. About 58% of kids admit someone has said mean or hurtful things to them online. More than four out of ten say it has happened more than once.
11. Cyber-bullying has increased in recent years. In a national survey of 10-17 year olds, twice as many children indicated they had been victims and perpetrators of online harassment in 2005 compared with 2000.

*Sources:*

Stop Cyber-bullying

Know to Love

New York State School Counselor Association

## How are kids using technology to cyber-bully?

*Kids are using cell phones, social networking sites (FaceBook, MySpace, Twitter, etc), web sites, chat rooms, online gaming, e-mail accounts, digital cameras, YouTube, instant messaging, blogs, and online personal polling*

*All the above technology methods/devices can be used in the listed ways. It is also very easy to do most of these things anonymously. Many kids today could easily send messages to a target using an unknown e-mail address, third-party websites, public library computers, personal computers, or a throwaway cell phone.*

Ways kids are cyber-bullying:

- sharing/posting inappropriate or embarrassing messages/photos/videos by sending to one person or via mass distribution
- “sexting” – sending sexual messages via texting
- cell phone are used to make actual calls that communicate inappropriate or threatening messages, or constant hang up calls
- cell phones/chat rooms can be used in three way calling scenarios that are meant to violate privacy and embarrass or harm the target
- messages/photos can be: harassing, mean, spiteful, teasing, derogatory, contain racial content, sexual content, threats, attack physical attributes, or contain embarrassing material
- Kids can pose as someone else by gaining access or learning password information or hack into someone else account, and then post whatever they want, usually in an attempt to incite problems or embarrass/harm others
- Kids can post photos/videos without adult consent, which is a violation of privacy, especially for minors, and could result in legal trouble
- some social networking sites can have many users who do not meet the site age requirement, due to user dishonesty
- defamatory websites with polling are easy to create (How many of you would like to punch Johnny?), also can be accomplished via social networking sites

# Resources for Kids

Parents:

Read these together with your child.

For younger students, break it up  
into manageable parts.

Kids: This is how to handle bully-behavior:

*Remember, bullies like power. So you need to be confident, calm, and assertive. Try a few of these tips and see if they work. If not, be sure to get some additional help from a friend, parents, or teacher.*

1. Stand up straight, look the bully in the eye and say in a firm, controlled voice, "Leave me alone", or "Stop it!" Then walk away.
2. Use humor to disarm or surprise the bully. Be careful not to make fun of the bully, but just respond with something silly.
3. If other people or friends are near by, join them so you are not alone. The bully looks for the easiest person to target, if your alone, the bully will notice you first. So go where the people are.
4. Do tell someone. Tell a friend you can trust, a parent, or a teacher.
5. "Fake It" Show the bully his/her actions have not affected you. Share your hurt later with someone you trust.
6. If you can, disarm the bully by agreeing with him. Try statements like, "Yes, that's true", and walk away.
7. Be a broken record. Whatever the bully says respond with the same statement over and over again. Try this: "That's your opinion", or "Ok, sure."
8. Just say NO. Tell the bully no. "No, you can't have my lunch, I am eating it."
9. Show confident behavior, even if you don't feel overly confident. Try these behaviors:
  - a. Look everyone in the eye when you approach them. Do not hang your head.
  - b. Smile! It won't kill you, and it may rub off on the bully.
  - c. Be friendly. If you're a loner, you may be targeted.
  - d. Lighten up your attitude, and don't let them ruffle your feathers! Letting some things slide is an option, but not a long term one.
  - e. Be nice to your enemy (hint: it's in the Bible). Talk them up and they'll hear about it, do something nice for them, compliment them.
  - f. Stand up for others who are being bullied. Offer them your support by talking with them, hanging out with them, and praying for them.

### **Kids: What **not** to do when bullied:**

*For bullies, this is a game to them, and if you do the following things in this list, it's like giving the bully points and an invitation to bully you again. So, don't give points away!*

1. Don't cry! Bullies love having power over people and making someone cry. When you cry, you give them what they want.
2. Don't run away (unless you feel you are in real danger). Stand your ground. At least look the bully in the eye and then walk away.
3. Don't fight back in any way (hit, kick, punch). This is one of the things the bully wants you to do. If you give in to what the bully wants, he/she wins. Even if you "won" the fight, the bully now wants revenge and will try to get you to fight again. Also, since bullies tend to be bigger/stronger than the people they pick on, you might get hurt.
4. Don't tell the bullies parents.
5. Don't hunch over, hang your head, or try to look small and think that the bully will stop noticing you. This gives the bully what they want, someone who appears weak.
6. Don't threaten the bully. This walks into the bullies trap, and he/she will come at you all the harder.
7. Don't call the bully a bad name. This will make the bully angry...bad news for you.
8. Don't ignore the bully. Ignoring them leads to more and worse bullying.
9. Don't respond with smart aleck comments like: "It takes one to know one." Do not respond by teasing back, or giving the bully the same put down he/she gave you.
10. Do not make the bully look foolish or make fun of him/her.
11. Do not plan to get even with the bully.

### **Attention: By-standers!**

By-standers are kids/peers that witness the bullying act. Most by-standers do not get involved for several reasons. You might think these are reasons to not get involved:

-the bully is my friend

- it's not my problem
- the bullied child is not my friend
- the bullied child deserved it, even asked for it, or had it coming
- bullying might toughen him/her up
- it's better to be in the "in-group" than to defend the outcasts

Those are really excuses to not do the right thing. ***If you do nothing about bullying, you're saying that bullying is okay with you.***

At VAES, we don't want by-standers who take no action. As Christian, we believe that Jesus would want us to help those who cannot help themselves, and to care for those who are placed in a weak position. This follows the Golden Rule of treating others' as we would want to be treated. If someone is bullying you, you would like for those around you to stand up against it.

Here is a list of safe and positive ways you can get involved on behalf of the bullied kid. Mostly likely, someone else will join you, and the bully will stand down because he/she will see that they are outnumbered.

1. If you see someone being bullied, or think they are being bullied, report it. Tell the teacher, an adult, or report it in the "Notes to the Teacher Box".
2. Refuse to join in.
3. Speak out. "Don't treat him that way", or "Don't use those words".
4. Outnumber the bully. Get a friend and go stand next to the kid getting bullied.
5. Offer words of encouragement to the bullied child. Share a time that you were bullied, and how you felt.
6. Offer to play with the child who was bullied, or sit with them at lunch.
7. Pray for the child who is being bullied, tell them you are praying for them.
8. Be a friend to the person being bullied.
9. Make an effort to include students who are left out.

### What will be the consequences if I am caught bullying at VAES?

See the VAES Bullying Rubric. It is included in this packet.

If the bullying continues (repeated offenses), your name will go before the VAES School Board, and the Board will make a decision on what happens next. It could include:

-counseling  
-suspension

-an intervention plan  
-expulsion

### **Cyber-bullying:**

Cyber bullying is bullying that takes place using technology, like computers, the internet, cell phones, email, or chat rooms.

Cyber bullying is just as hurtful as traditional bullying, and sometimes, even worse.

If you are being cyber-bullied:

1. Stop using the computer/cell phone/device, do not respond,

- and get an adult.
2. The adult should: copy and save all messages/pictures, save cell phone messages/texts, chat room comments, email contents, etc. *If you have no adult around to help you, try to copy and save the information yourself.*
  3. Block or filter communication (adults and children: if you do not know how to do this, find someone who can teach you or look on line for tutorials)

### Helpful advice on what to NEVER do when using technology:

- Do not post pictures/videos without permission from the parents of those in the picture/video, this is a violation of privacy, especially for minors (children)
- Do not publish any content that would be embarrassing or hurtful
- Do not publish anything that you do not want the whole world to see and read
- Do not use inappropriate language online
- Do not make threats online, even if you think you are just joking
- Never communicate with strangers online, never give out personal information such as address, phone number, or name
- Never share your password/log in information
- Never agree to meet in person someone that you've communicated with online (it could be a stranger posing as your friend)
- Do not lie about your age online
- Do not forward any inappropriate content you receive

*Remember to alert an adult right away if you come across something using technology that makes you uncomfortable or scared.*

### Questions to Ask Yourself

- Would anyone be embarrassed or hurt by what I published?
- Who will be able to see what I published?
- What would my parents or teachers say if they saw what I published?
- How would I feel if the head of my dream job or dream school saw what I published?
- How would I feel if what I published was all over the national news?
- Am I proud of what I published?
- Do I have a clear conscience about what I published?

### Guidelines to Publish By

- Assume that everyone will see what you publish. You have little control over who might see what you publish.
- Consider that people might use what you publish to make fun of you or cause you harm. How might your worst enemy use what you published to make life miserable for you?
- Do not publish inappropriate language or gestures. You don't want people to judge you negatively when they see your work.
- Do not publish something that you didn't create. Use your own creativity to publish original content.
- Involve your parents. Show them what you are creating, publishing and posting so they know they can trust that you will use good judgment.

